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The Immortality of the Soul

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LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON.

The Immortality of the Soul

A PROTEST. By

JOSEPH AGAR BEET D.D.

"WHO ALONE HATH IMMORTALITY"

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FIFTH EDITION

LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON 27 PATERNOSTER ROW 1902

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ld., London ana Aylesbury.

PREFACE

THE following pages are a reprint of articles published in THE EXPOSITOR during the last six months.

They are a protest against a doctrine which, during long centuries, has been almost universally accepted as divine truth taught in the Bible, but which seems to me altogether alien to it in both phrase and thought, and derived only from Greek Philosophy. Until recent times, this alien doctrine has been comparatively harmless. But, as I have here shown, it is now producing most serious results. My protest against it is an appeal, which no Protestant can disallow, from the traditional teaching of the Church to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. Of the justice of this appeal, my readers must judge.

It will of course be said, of this as of some

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other doctrines, that, if not explicitly taught in the Bible, it is implied and assumed there. But they who ask us to accept an important doctrine on this ground must prove clearly that it is so implied and assumed. For we cannot accept their mere dictum as evidence. They who claim for their teaching the authority of God must prove that it comes from Him. Such proof in this case, I have never seen.

RICHMOND,
August 25th, 1901

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CHAPTER I

IMMORTALITY BEFORE CHRIST

During long ages, until some thirty years ago, the doctrine of *The Immortality of the Soul* was accepted almost without contradiction as fundamental to Christianity and even to religion. In the following pages I shall discuss the history of the phrase and the doctrine, the evidence on which the doctrine rests, and its worth as a factor of Christian thought.

We shall find the phrase and doctrine among the Greeks; other similar yet different doctrines, but not the phrase, among the Egyptians; and the phrase and doctrine in some Jewish writers shortly before or soon after the appearance of Christ.

The Greeks.

That the *soul* of man is *immortal* or *deathless*,

or in other words that every soul will exist in happiness or misery for endless ages, is a conspicuous feature of the teaching of PLATO. But that this doctrine was by no means universal among the Greeks of his day, we learn from p. 70 of his *Phædo*, where we read, "In what relates to the soul men are apt to be incredulous; they fear that when she has left the body her place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death she may be destroyed and perish, (*διαφθείρηταί τε καὶ ἀπολλύηται*,) immediately on her release from the body issuing forth like smoke or air and in her flight vanishing away into nothingness."

In the pages following, Socrates is represented as arguing against this popular belief. He endeavours first to prove that the soul existed before birth, and then that it will exist after death. On p. 70 he goes on to say, "Whether the souls of men after death are or are not in Hades, may be argued in this manner:—The ancient doctrine of which I have been speaking affirms that they go from hence into the other world, and return hither, and are born from

the dead. Now if this be true, and the living come from the dead, then our souls must exist there: for, if not, how could they be born again?"

Lower down, at the foot of p. 72, an interlocutor says, "Your favourite doctrine, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learnt that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul had been in some place before existing in the human form. Here then is another proof that *the soul* is an *immortal* something:" *ἀθάνατόν τι ἔοικεν ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι.*

On p. 77, the argument and dialogue continue. "I think, said Simmias, that Kebes is satisfied. Although he is the most incredulous of mortals, yet I think that he is persuaded of this, that our soul existed before we were born. But that after death the soul will continue to exist is not yet proved even to my own satisfaction. I cannot get rid of the feeling of the many to which Kebes was referring, that when the man dies the soul may be scattered, and that this

may be the end of her. For, admitting that she may have been born elsewhere and framed out of other elements and was in existence before entering the human body, why after having entered in and gone out again may she not herself be destroyed and come to an end? Very true, Simmias, said Kebes; that our soul existed before we were born, was the first half of the argument, and this appears to have been proved. That the soul will exist after death as well as before birth, is the other half of which the proof is still wanting and has to be supplied."

On the pages following, Socrates argues that the soul is not compounded, and therefore cannot be dissolved; that it is unseen, and that while the seen changes the unseen remains; and that at death the soul goes to the pure and the always-existing and the immortal and the unchangeable, to which it is akin.

On p. 81, he says that the soul which has learnt the lessons of philosophy goes at death to the divine and immortal and rational, and dwells in peace; but that the sensual are dragged down into gloom until they are imprisoned in

another body appropriate to their former lives. "Men who have followed after gluttony and wantonness and drunkenness, and have no thought of avoiding them, will probably pass into asses and beasts of that sort. And those who have chosen the portion of injustice and tyranny and violence will pass into wolves or into hawks or kites. Whither else can we suppose them to go?" And Socrates goes on to argue at length that the true philosopher has no need to fear that at death his soul will cease to be.

Having thus endeavoured to prove that the soul will survive death, the dialogue goes on to adduce evidence that by its own nature the soul of man can never cease to be.

On p. 88, a serious question is raised. "Suppose we grant even more than you say, and besides acknowledging that the soul existed before birth admit also that after death the souls of some exist and will continue to exist, and will be born and die again and again, and that there is a natural strength in the soul which will hold out and be born many times, nevertheless we may still be inclined to think that

she will weary in the labours of successive births and may at last succumb in one of her deaths and utterly perish ; and this death and dissolution of the body which brings destruction to the soul may be unknown to any of us, for no one of us can have had any experience of it : and, if so, I maintain that he who is confident about death has but a foolish confidence, unless he is able to prove that the *soul* is altogether *immortal and imperishable* : *ψυχὴ ἀθάνατόν τε καὶ ἀνώλεθρον.* But, if he cannot prove it, he who is about to die must needs fear about his soul lest when it is unyoked from the body it may altogether perish."

Against this serious objection, Plato, speaking through the lips of Socrates, argues at great length. His arguments move our pity. For they are the painful efforts of a good man straining his eyes, in the twilight and uncertainty of Greek philosophy, to catch a glimpse of a ray of light from beyond the grave: and for us, walking in the light of the "promise of life in Christ Jesus," they have no practical value. In these arguments we frequently find the phrase

the soul is immortal: it occurs four times on p. 95, and not less than twenty times in the whole dialogue. Moreover, its meaning is indisputable. Plato uses the phrase to assert that every human soul, by its very nature, will continue in conscious existence for endless ages.

This teaching is put to noble moral use. On p. 107 we read: "If the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, not only for this time only which we call living, but for all time. And the danger would seem to be awful if one shall neglect her. For if death were an end of all, a fortunate thing it would be to the wicked when dead to be quit of the body, and at the same time of their wickedness along with the soul. But now, since the soul is manifestly immortal, there is no other escape or salvation from wickedness except for it to become as good and as wise as possible. For the soul takes nothing else with her into Hades except education and nurture, which are said very much to help or injure the dead man straightway at the beginning of his journey thither."

At the conclusion of the work we read that

those guilty of great crimes will be cast into Tartarus, whence they will never go out; that those less guilty will be cast into Tartarus for a time, and then if their victims take pity on them they will be allowed to escape; and that the righteous will go to the mansions of the blessed.

The same teaching, clothed in the same language, is found in Plato's *Republic*. The writer argues, in bk. x. pp. 608–610, that vice cannot destroy the soul, and that therefore nothing else can. "Do the injustice and other badness of the soul waste and consume the soul? do they by inhering in her and clinging to her at last bring her to death and separate her from the body? Certainly not. And it is unreasonable to suppose that anything can perish from without through external operation of evil, which could not be destroyed from within by internal corruption." Lower down he says: "But the soul, which cannot be destroyed by evil inherent or external, must it not be something always existing, and it always existing immortal? Certainly. And if so, the souls must always be the same: for they will not become fewer, it

not one perishes ; nor more." Here again we find frequently the same phrase, *the soul is immortal.* The book concludes with a tremendous vision of judgment, in which all men good and bad receive beyond death exact retribution according to their works.

Similarly in Plato's *Meno,* p. 81 : " The soul of man is immortal, and at one time has an end which they call dying, and then again is born, but never perishes : ἀπόλλυσθαι δ' οὐδέποτε. We must therefore live our life in the most holy way. . . . The soul then, as being immortal and having been born again many times," etc. We have the same phraseology and teaching in the *Phædrus,* where, on pp. 245–6, we read, " Every soul is immortal. For that which is always in motion is immortal. . . . But if that which is moved by itself is declared to be immortal, he who says that this is the essence and description of the soul will not be put to confusion. For the body, as being moved from without, is soulless : but that which is moved from within has a soul, this being the nature of the soul. But if this be so, that which is self-

moved being no other than soul, necessarily the soul must be unbegotten and immortal."

The immortality of the soul is discussed at great length in bk. i. of CICERO's *Tusculan Disputations*. He admits the wide diversity of opinion on the subject. So in art. 9: "Some imagine death to be the departure of the soul from the body: others think that the soul and body perish together, and that the soul is extinguished in the body. Of those who think that the soul departs, some think it to be immediately dissipated, others that it continues for a time, others that it continues always." We frequently meet the phrase *immortalitas animorum* or "immortality of souls," or other equivalent phrases, *e.g.* arts. 11, 14, 16, 17. In art. 16, we read that "Pherecydes, a Syrian, first said that the souls of men are eternal;" that his disciple, Pythagoras, held the same opinion; and that Plato was said to have come to Italy and there learnt the Pythagorean teaching about the eternity of souls. In art. 32, Cicero speaks of the Stoics as saying that human souls survive death, but not for ever. He accepts Plato's metaphysical

arguments for the endless permanence of the human soul; and indeed quotes at full length the passage from the *Phædrus* given above in part. But of Plato's conspicuous and noble teaching of moral retribution beyond death, he has but slight hold. He rather looks upon bodily life as an evil, and death as release from it; thus contradicting Plato. Of the moral issues involved, he seems to have thought little.

That Pythagoras taught that the *soul* is *immortal*, is also asserted by Diogenes Laertius (bk. viii. 19) and by other ancient writers. The same phrase, that man's soul is immortal, is used by Herodotus, bk. ii. 123. This proves that the phrase and thought were earlier than Plato.

To what extent the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was accepted by the masses in ancient Greece, we do not know. But in later days the popularity of Plato made it widely known, as matter for discussion, among educated Greeks and Romans.

The Egyptians.

We turn now to teaching about the soul much

earlier than the earliest Greek philosophers whose opinions have come down to us.

Throughout THE BOOK OF THE DEAD, recently published in English by Dr. Wallis Budge, curator of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, immortal and endless life beyond the grave, with all good things, very much like the good things of earth, is promised to the righteous on condition of observance of certain religious duties. So ch. xxxi., rubric: "If this chapter be known by the deceased, he shall come forth by day, he shall rise up and walk upon the earth among the living, and he shall never fail and come to an end, never, never, never." But this immortality of blessing is never supported, as are the rewards for which Plato looked, by any teaching about the indestructible nature of the soul. Its permanence is always represented as a reward of righteousness and religion. About the fate of the wicked, little is said. But apparently their doom was annihilation.

In Dr. Budge's Introduction to *The Book of the Dead*, p. cvii, we read: "The evil heart, or the heart which had failed to balance the feather

symbolic of the law, was given to the monster Ammit to devour ; thus punishment consisted of instant annihilation, unless we imagine that the destruction of the heart was extended over an indefinite period." The judgment scene here referred to is reproduced, from the famous papyrus of Ani, now in the British Museum and also published by Dr. Budge, as frontispiece to his edition of *The Book of the Dead*. The man being judged stands before scales in which his heart is being weighed. The god Thoth records the result. Behind him stands a monster ready to devour him if in the balance his heart is found wanting.

In an admirable little book, Wiedemann's *Egyptian Doctrine of Immortality* (translation by Grevel), we read : "Nowhere are we clearly informed as to the fate of the condemned who could not stand before the god Osiris. We are told that the enemies of the gods perish, that they are destroyed or overthrown ; but such vague expressions afford no certainty as to how far the Egyptians in general believed in the existence of a hell as a place of punishment or

purification for the wicked ; or whether, as seems more probable, they held some general belief that when judgment was pronounced against a man his heart and other immortal parts were not restored to him. For such a man no re-edification and no resurrection were possible. The immortal elements were divine, and by nature pure and imperishable ; but they could be preserved from entering the Osiris, from re-entering the hull of the man who had proved himself unworthy of them. The soul, indeed, as such did not die, although personal annihilation was the lot of the evildoer in whom it had dwelt. But it was the hope of continued individuality which their doctrine held out to the Egyptians ; this it was which they promised to the good and in all probability denied to the wicked. After judgment the righteous entered into blessedness, unchanged in appearance as in nature ; the only difference being that, while the existence which they had led upon earth had been limited in its duration, the life of the world to come was eternal."

The above is confirmed by Canon Rawlinson

in his *History of Ancient Egypt*, vol. i. p. 318: "Ultimately, after many trials, if purity was not attained, the wicked soul underwent a final sentence at the hands of Osiris, Judge of the Dead, and, being pronounced incurable, suffered complete and absolute annihilation."

Herodotus reports (bk. ii. 123) that the Egyptians "were the first who taught that man's soul is immortal;" using the phrase soon afterwards so common in the writings of Plato Indisputably the Egyptians anticipated Plato by teaching that beyond death retribution awaits all men good and bad. But, as we have just seen, they did not base this doctrine, as did Plato and probably Pythagoras, on the endless and essential permanence of all human souls. We need not wonder that Herodotus, a Greek stranger visiting Egypt, did not find out this important difference between teaching familiar to him and the belief of the Egyptians.

Herodotus also says that some Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians the doctrine of the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of various kinds of animals. But Plato taught, as

do the Hindus, that this transmigration is strictly retributive. The Egyptians looked at the power to assume various forms as a reward given to the righteous.

In all ancient literature, so far as I know, the phrase *every soul immortal*, or phraseology equivalent, is found only in the school of Greek philosophy of which Plato is the most conspicuous representative. Doctrine equivalent to that conveyed by these words of Plato underlies the religion of the Hindus; but is not, so far as I know, found in any school of thought which influenced the Jews of our Lord's day or the early Christians. Common to Plato and the Hindus, whatever bè the link or connection, is also the doctrine of retributive transmigration; which also is, I believe, unknown elsewhere in ancient literature.

The Jews.

That all human souls are immortal, or that they will think and feel for ever, is not taught or implied in the Old Testament. That man was made in the image of God, by a definite act, and

in fulfilment of a deliberate purpose of God, is conspicuously taught in Gen. i. 26, 27, ii. 7; and reveals the infinite superiority of man to the lower animals. But this by no means implies that he will necessarily continue to exist for endless ages after the moral purpose of his existence has finally failed and when existence has become an unmixed curse. Certainly these passages are a very unsafe basis for dogmatic assertion that all human souls good and bad will exist for ever.

In Eccl. xii. 7 we read that at death "the spirit will return to God who gave it." But this return to God implies only (see *v.* 14) the judgment of the dead, not necessarily their endless permanence. In Dan. xii. 2 we read that "many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life and some to shame, to eternal abhorrence." This last word does not necessarily imply eternal consciousness, but only the lasting effect on others of the doom of the lost. So Isa. lxvi. 24: "they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." That retribution beyond the grave, so important an element in Christian teaching,

occupies so small and indefinite a place in the Old Testament, in contrast to its large place in the religion of ancient Egypt and in the teaching of Plato, is one of the most perplexing facts in Old Testament theology.

After the close of the canon, retribution beyond the grave became more definite in the thought of Israel. So Judith xvi. 17 : "The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment, to put fire and worms in their flesh ; and they shall wail, feeling the pain, for ever. In Wisdom ii. 23 we read that "God created man for incorruptibility." But this does not imply that in all cases this purpose will be accomplished. For it is equally true that God created man in order that he might love and serve his Creator. Are we then to infer that in all men this purpose also will be attained? The writer continues in ch. iii. 1-4 : "The souls of righteous men are in God's hands ; and torment shall not touch them. They seemed, in the eyes of foolish ones, to be dead : and their departure was reckoned an injury, and their journey from us a calamity. But they are in peace. For, even

it in the sight of men they be punished, their hope is full of immortality."

In the book of Enoch we read of a resurrection of the dead, of destruction and torment by fire for the wicked, and of eternal life and endless days for the righteous. So ch. li. 1: "Sheol will give back that which it has received, and hell will give back that which it owes." Also ch. liii. 2: "Sinners will perish before the face of the Lord of Spirits and will be removed from off the face of His earth, continually for ever and ever." And ch. liv. 6: "And cast them on that day into a burning furnace, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance upon them." Also ch. lviii. 3: "And the righteous will be in the light of the sun, and the elect in the light of eternal life: there will be no end to the days of their life, and the days of the holy will be without number. And they will seek the light and find righteousness with the Lord of Spirits: and there will be peace to the righteous." But we have no definite teaching about the endless permanence of the soul.

A few references to the immortality of the

soul are found in the voluminous theological writings of PHILO, an Egyptian Jew, an older contemporary of Christ. In his work on *The Creation of the World*, § 46, in a comment on Genesis ii. 7, we read: "One may rightly say that man is on the boundary-line of a mortal and an immortal nature, partaking so far as is needful of each; and that he has been born both mortal and immortal, mortal as to the body, but as to the mind immortal." Similarly, *On Dreams*, bk. i. 22, where men good and bad are spoken of as "incorruptible and immortal." But the writings of Philo are permeated by the philosophy of Plato; and cannot therefore be appealed to as embodying independent Jewish thought.

JOSEPHUS reports, in his *Wars*, bk. ii. 8. 11, that the Pharisees believed that the "bodies are indeed corruptible and their substance not abiding, but that the souls continue immortal always;" that the souls of the righteous pass the ocean to a place of rest and blessing, but that the wicked go to a subterranean abode "full of ceaseless punishments." This teaching, Josephus compares with that of the Greeks. He attributes

similar teaching to the Essenes. Also in his *Antiquities*, bk. xviii. 1. 3, 5, he says that the Pharisees believed that souls have "immortal strength;" and that the Essenes "make souls to be immortal." But these statements of Josephus cannot be accepted as decisive evidence that the Jews of his day accepted the natural immortality of the soul. For, like Philo, he wrote in Greek, was familiar with Greek philosophy, and was eager to call attention to elements common to this last and the Jewish Scriptures. On the other hand, this doctrine of Plato would be welcome to the Pharisees, as in later days it was welcomed by Christian teachers, because of the support it rendered to the all-important doctrine of retribution beyond the grave, which was common to the Pharisees and to Plato. Moreover, we must remember that for three centuries before Christ the Jewish nation had been either under Greek rule or at least in close contact with Greek thought. We may therefore not unfairly attribute to Plato and his school, of whose influence in the age preceding that of Christ Cicero affords abundant proof, the doctrine of

the natural immortality of the soul so far as it influenced Jewish thought. In other words, we have so far found no trace of this doctrine outside the school of thought of which Plato is the best-known representative. And we are unable to determine how far this school of thought was prevalent among the Jews of the Apostolic age.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

In ch. i. we found abundant proof that Plato taught retribution beyond the grave, blessing for the righteous and terrible suffering for the wicked; and that he supported this teaching by endeavouring to prove that the soul of man is in its very nature indestructible, that it will never finally cease to think and feel. We found also decisive evidence that, long before the time of Plato, the ancient Egyptians lived in hope of endless life beyond the grave for the righteous and religious, and expected apparently extinction for the wicked. We found proof that during the three centuries before Christ the godly Jews looked forward to "eternal life," and warned the wicked of punishment awaiting them beyond death. A Jewish contemporary of Christ, a

student of Plato, accepts in a few places the teaching of this last about the immortality of the soul: and Josephus, a later contemporary of Paul, says that the same teaching was held by the Pharisees and Essenes of his own day.

Retribution beyond the grave is implied clearly in the teaching of John the Baptist recorded in Mt. iii. 10–12. For the reward and punishment there described can have no place in the present life. The same is implied in the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount: Mt. vii. 19–27. Earlier in the same discourse (*vv.* 13, 14), we read of two paths, one leading to *destruction* and the other to *life*.

In a parable recorded in Mt. xiii. 24–30, explained in *vv.* 39–43, Christ declares that at the completion of the age, at His bidding, the wicked will be cast into "the furnace of fire," where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," and that then "the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." On this teaching, emphasis is laid by its repetition in *vv.* 48–50. Similar teaching, at an important turning-point in the life of Christ, is found in

ch. xvi. 27: "The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then He will give back to each according to his action." A vision of judgment is given in ch. xxv. 31–46, where "all the nations" are gathered before Christ sitting on a throne of glory, and receive their award from His lips. He welcomes "the righteous into eternal life," and dismisses others, under a curse, "into eternal punishment." The above teaching is confirmed by other passages in the First Gospel, and by parallels in the Second and Third Gospels.

In John iii. 16 we meet with the alternative, "may not perish but may have eternal life." In ch. v. 28, 29, Christ announces that at a definite "hour" He will summon all the dead to a resurrection of life or of judgment.

In Acts xvii. 31, Paul is reported to have said at Athens that God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world by a Man whom He has marked out for that honour by raising Him from the dead. Before Felix, as we read in ch. xxiv. 25, Paul reasoned about "the coming judgment."

These scanty references in addresses of Paul are abundantly confirmed by his Epistles. In Rom. ii. 6–12 we read that God "will give back to each according to his works," in close accord with Mt. xvi. 27; including glory, honour, peace, and eternal life for the righteous, and for the wicked anger and fury, affliction and helplessness, and destruction. So ch. xiv. 10: "We all shall stand at the judgment-seat of God." Exact retribution is conspicuously announced in 2 Cor. v. 10: "All of us must needs be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, in order that each may obtain the things done through his body, whether good or bad." It is announced with equal definiteness and solemnity in Gal. vi. 7, 8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatever a man sow, this he will also reap. Because he that sows for his own flesh shall, from the flesh, reap corruption. But he that sows for the Spirit shall, from the Spirit, reap eternal life." In Ph. iii. 19, we read of some "whose end is destruction." This can only mean destruction beyond the grave: for destruction of the body

by death is the lot of all men, good and bad. In 2 Th. i. 8, 9, we read of Christ "giving just punishment to them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, who shall pay penalty, even eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength." On the other hand, in 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, at the close of his life the Apostle writes, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that have loved His appearing."

The above passages refer evidently to a retribution beyond the grave; and, with others similar, they leave no room for doubt that this was an important element in the teaching of Paul.

In 1 Peter v. 4, we read of the unfading crown of glory awaiting faithful shepherds of the flock of Christ.

A more tremendous vision of judgment is found in Rev xx. 11–15: "I saw a great white

throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven, and place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne : and books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead in it : and death and Hades gave up the dead in them. And they were judged, each according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

The above quotations, which represent teaching running through the entire New Testament, are complete documentary evidence that retribution beyond death for all actions done on earth was an important and conspicuous element of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

The reward awaiting the righteous is in Mt. xix. 16, 29 and its parallels, in ch. xxv. 46, Luke x. 25, seventeen times in the Fourth

Gospel, eleven times in the addresses and letters of Paul, and six times in the First Epistle of John, described by the term *eternal life*. The word *eternal*, αἰώνιος, from αἰών, an *age* or lifetime, may be literally rendered *age-lasting*. In Prov. xxii. 28, xxiii. 10, "Remove not eternal landmarks which thy fathers set," it describes a boundary which has stood for ages. Similarly Ps. lxxvii. 5, where "*eternal* years" are parallel to "ancient days." But much more frequently it refers to the future. The ordinances of the Levitical ritual are very frequently—*e.g.* Ex. xii. 14, 17, 24, Lev. xxiii. 14, 21, 31, 41, —described as eternal statutes, νόμιμον αἰώνιον. Similarly, in Gen. xvii. 8, xlviii. 4, Canaan is promised to the seed of Abraham "for an eternal possession." This use in the Septuagint, where the word is found some hundred and fifty times, must have influenced the meaning attached to it by the writers and early readers of the New Testament, who frequently quote the Septuagint. It forbids us to interpret the word *eternal* in the New Testament as in itself equivalent to *endless*. For no Christian will claim

endless permanence for the Levitical ordinances. But this use of the word casts no shadow of doubt on the absolute endlessness of the life promised by Christ to His faithful servants. For this rests on grounds independent of the word before us. For, as we read in John iii. 16, God gave His Son in order that they may not perish: and cessation of the life promised to them would be perdition. In Luke i. 33 we read that of the Kingdom of Christ "there will be no end:" and of that Kingdom they are citizens. The inheritance awaiting them is, in 1 Peter i. 4, said to be incorruptible and unfading. So is the crown of glory: ch. v. 4. But cessation of blessedness would be both decay and corruption. That the life promised by Christ to those who put faith in Him and obey Him is absolutely endless, is still further removed from all possibility of doubt by the immortal life of Christ Himself which His human brethren will share: see John xiv. 19, Rom. viii. 17, 35-39, Rev. iii. 21.

This "promise of life in Christ Jesus" and the hope of endless blessedness thereby evoked in us rest securely on the word of Christ confirmed by

Him who gave His only-begotten Son in order that every one who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life, and raised Him from the dead, so that our faith and hope (1 Peter i. 21) may be in God. For no historic fact is more certain than that Jesus of Nazareth promised to all who put faith in Him a new life of devotion to God on earth, and endless blessedness beyond the grave.

In awful contrast to this blessed *life* stands, throughout the New Testament, the *destruction* of the wicked: ὄλεθρος, ἀπώλεια, ἀπόλλυμι. These words are found in the New Testament in this technical theological sense more than thirty times. They are rendered in the R.V. *destruction* and *destroy*, *perdition* and *perish*, *lose* and *lost*; and convey in Greek the combined significance of these English equivalents. They denote neither suffering nor extinction, nor do they exclude these ideas, but simply *ruin*, the loss of all that gives worth to existence, whether the ruined object ceases to be or continues in a worthless mode of existence. These words, and their cognates and equivalents, are frequently

used by Plato to denote the extinction of the soul. But, while thus using them, he puts his meaning beyond doubt by careful circumlocution : see p. 50. On the other hand, they are frequently used in Greek literature in cases in which there is no thought of extinction, but only of utter ruin. So Luke xv. 6, 9, 32, where the *lost* was afterwards found ; ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὑρέθη.

In addition to this loss of endless blessedness, we find in the teaching of Christ recorded in the Synoptist Gospels and in the Book of Revelation pictures of actual and acute suffering ; *e.g.*, Mt. viii. 12, xiii. 42, 50, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51, Luke xvi. 23—25.

It is worthy of note that by Christ and the Apostles this promise of blessing and this threatening of punishment are never directly or indirectly supported, as the hope of reward after death is conspicuously supported in the writings of Plato, by any doctrine of the essential and endless permanence of the human soul. Both phraseology and thought of Plato are altogether absent from the New Testament. The word *im-*

mortality is found there only in 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, in reference not to the soul but to the body, which though mortal must put on immortality; and in 1 Tim. vi. 16, as an attribute of God. An equivalent term, *incorruptibility* (ἀφθαρσία), or absence of decay, is found in reference to the body in 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54; and in other references in Rom. ii. 7, Eph. vi. 24, 2 Tim. i. 10. The cognate adjective is used as an attribute of God in Rom. i. 23, 1 Tim. i. 17; as a description of the reward of the righteous in 1 Cor. ix. 25, 1 Pet. i. 4; of their risen bodies in 1 Cor. xv. 52; and in other references in 1 Pet. i. 23, iii. 4. The infinite value of the soul is recognised by Christ in Mt. xvi. 26. But the New Testament never asserts or implies its essential and endless permanence; or, in other words, that, in virtue of its own nature or by the will of God, every human soul will think and feel for an endless succession of ages.

The above denial will find presumptive support in ch. iv., where I shall refer to the absence of any direct appeal to the Bible in various modern

theological works which maintain the immortality of the soul.

It is worthy of note that whereas, as we saw on p. 3, Plato taught that the soul of man is immortal (*ἀνώλεθρον*) and imperishable, Christ asserts or implies the possibility of its destruction. So Mt. x. 28: "Fear Him that is able to *destroy* both body and soul": *ψυχὴν ἀπολέσαι*. Similarly ch. xvi. 25: "Whoever desires to save his soul will *lose* it:" *ἀπολέσει αὐτήν*. The word destruction, used frequently in the New Testament to describe the doom of the wicked, is quite alien to the thought and phrase of Plato. In this respect, modern popular Christian eschatology is much nearer to Plato than to Christ. On the other hand, Christ's promise of life eternal for the righteous and His threatening of destruction for the wicked were anticipated in a remarkable way, as we saw on pp. 12–15, in the teaching of the ancient Egyptians.

It has been suggested that the endless permanence of all human souls, even of the wicked, about whom alone there can be any question,

may be inferred from the descriptions, in the Synoptist Gospels and the Book of Revelation, of the actual torment of the lost, implying continued existence, without any suggestion that their sufferings will ever cease. This inference would be legitimate if the endless suffering of the lost were taught clearly and without contradiction by the various writers of the New Testament. But, in this case, the immortality of the soul, as an inference from the endless suffering of the lost, could not be appealed to, as has frequently been done, in support of this latter doctrine. Otherwise, we should be arguing in a circle. But, as I shall show in ch. v., the doctrine of the endless suffering of the lost is supported by at most some six or seven passages of Holy Scripture, and these by no means decisive; and against these must be set a still larger number of passages quite as definite which seem to assert or imply the ultimate extinction of sinners or of evil. This doctrine also lies open to most tremendous, and to many minds insuperable, moral objection. A doctrine itself resting on a foundation so unsafe cannot be

made a safe foundation for another doctrine so important as the immortality of the soul.

On the other hand, since in the New Testament life beyond the grave is reserved for the righteous, and the wicked are said to be destroyed, it has been inferred that the punishment of the wicked will be ultimate extinction. This inference also is unsafe. For the life referred to is much more than existence. It is the normal and blessed state of a rational creature of God. And the loss of this life may be fitly described as destruction, even though the ruined ones continue to exist: for it is the loss of all that gives worth to existence.

We have now seen that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, *i.e.* the essential and endless permanence of all human souls, so prominent in the teaching of Plato, has no place in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. The difference is significant. In the absence of an historic revelation, Plato appealed, in proof of a retribution beyond the grave, a most important element in morality and religion, to the spiritual nature of the soul. But Christ claimed

to be a Teacher sent from God to announce eternal life for all who put faith in Him. And, in support of His claim and of His gospel of life eternal, His followers appealed to His resurrection from the dead. To appeal now to the immortality of the soul in support of the Christian hope, is to illumine the light of the Gospel with the dim torch of Greek philosophy.

CHAPTER III

IMMORTALITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

In ch. i. we saw that Plato taught that the soul of man is immortal, *i.e.* that, for good or ill, immortality is its inalienable attribute; in contrast, as we saw in ch. ii., to Christ and His Apostles, who taught that incorruptibility—*i.e.* a state without decay—and eternal life are the reward awaiting the righteous, whereas destruction awaits the wicked. We shall now consider what the early Christian writers, living in an intellectual environment greatly influenced by the teaching of Plato, said about the immortality of the soul and about the eternal life promised by Christ to the righteous.

The earliest Christian writers reproduce the thought, and in large measure the language, of the New Testament, and say nothing about, or reject, the immortality of the soul. Clement of

ROME, in his Epistle *To the Corinthians*, ch. 35, speaks of "life in immortality" as a gift of God to the righteous. So IGNATIUS, *To Polycarp*, ch. 2, "Be sober, as God's athlete: the prize is incorruptibility and life eternal." He writes *To the Magnesians*, ch. 20, about "the medicine of immortality, an antidote so as not to die but to live in Jesus Christ always."

In JUSTIN'S *Dialogue with Trypho*, chs. 5, 6, we have a conversation of the writer with an aged Christian about the immortality of the soul as taught by Plato. This doctrine, both speakers repudiate on the ground that the soul has been begotten, and therefore cannot be immortal. The old man continues, "I do not say that all souls die: for that were truly a piece of good fortune for the wicked." (This means, apparently, that they do not die when the body dies.) "The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and the wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus some who have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist

and be punished. . . . Now the soul partakes of life, since God wills it to live. Thus then it will not even partake of life when God does not will it to live. For, to live is not its attribute, as it is God's; but, as a man does not live always and the soul is not for ever joined to the body, since whenever this harmony must be broken up the soul leaves the body and the man exists no longer, even so, whenever the soul must cease to exist, the spirit of life is removed from it and there is no more soul but it goes back to the place from whence it was taken." The whole dialogue leaves no room to doubt that Justin did not hold Plato's doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls.

THEOPHILUS *To Autolycus*, bk. ii. 27, writes: "But some will say to us, Was man by nature mortal? Certainly not. Was he then immortal? Neither do we affirm this. But one will say, Was he then nothing? Not even this hits the mark. He was by nature neither mortal nor immortal. For, if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God. Again, if He had made him

mortal, God would seem to be the cause of his death. Neither then immortal nor yet mortal did He make him, but, as we have said above, capable of both; so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God; but if, on the other hand, he should turn to the things of death, disobeying God, he should himself be the cause of death to himself. For God made man free, and with power over himself. That, then, which man brought upon himself through carelessness and disobedience, this now God bestows on him as a gift, through His own kindness and pity, when men obey Him. For, as man, disobeying, drew death upon himself, so, obeying the will of God, he who desires is able to gain for himself life eternal. For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruptibility."

Somewhat later IRENÆUS writes, in bk. ii. 34. 3, that "The Father of all imparts continuance for

ever and ever on those who are saved. For life does not arise from us, nor from our own nature, but is bestowed according to the grace of God. And therefore he who shall preserve the life bestowed upon him and give thanks to Him that imparted it, shall receive also length of days for ever and ever. But he who shall reject it and prove himself ungrateful to his Maker, inasmuch as he has been created and has not recognised Him who bestowed the gift upon him, deprives himself of the privilege of continuance for ever and ever. And for this reason the Lord declared to those who showed themselves ungrateful to Him, If ye have not been faithful in that which is little, who shall give you that which is great? indicating that those who, in this brief temporal life, have shown themselves ungrateful to Him who bestowed it, shall justly not receive from Him length of days for ever and ever."

On the other hand, in bk. v. 4. 1, (cf. ch. 7. 1,) Irenæus speaks of the soul as one of the things "which are by nature immortal, and to which it belongs by their own nature to live." This

apparent contradiction reveals the influence of two contradictory lines of thought."

At the close of the second century CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA writes, "Let us observe God's commandments and follow His counsels: they are the short and direct way that leads to eternity," *i.e.* to eternal existence; and again, "When baptized, we become enlightened; enlightened, we become sons; as sons we become perfect and immortal." See *Pæd.*, 1. 3, 6.

From a fragment of a lost work *On the Soul*, the following words are quoted in Migne's edition of Clement, vol. ii. p. 751: "All souls are immortal, even of the godless, to whom it were better not to be incorruptible." But nothing similar is found in Clement's extant voluminous works.

In the middle of the second century TATIAN writes, in his *Address to the Greeks*, ch. 13: "The soul is not in itself immortal, O Greeks, but mortal. Yet it is possible for it not to die. If indeed it knows not the truth, it dies and is dissolved with the body, but rises again at last at the end of the world with the body, receiving death by punishment in immortality." About

the demons, he says, in ch. 14: "That which is now their chief distinction, that they do not die like men, they will retain when about to suffer punishment: they will not partake of everlasting life so as to receive this, instead of death, in a blessed immortality. And as we, to whom it now easily happens to die, afterwards receive the immortal with enjoyment or the painful with immortality, so the demons who abuse the present life to purposes of wrong doing, dying continually even while they live, will have hereafter the same immortality, like that which they had during the life they lived, but in its nature like that of men, who actually performed what the demons prescribed to them during their lifetime." The phrases *punishment in immortality* and *the painful with immortality* deviate from the phraseology of the New Testament. For there the term *immortality* and its equivalents *incorruptibility* and *eternal life* are used only to describe a state of blessing. Thus Tatian approaches the language of Plato, with whose writings he was familiar.

We turn now to a very able treatise on *The Resurrection of the Dead* by ATHENAGORAS, an

Athenian philosopher who became a Christian in the latter half of the second century. He writes in ch. 13 that God "made man of an immortal soul and a body;" in ch. 24, of "men possessing an immortal soul and a rational judgment;" in ch. 20, of "the soul as incorruptible;" and in ch. 23, of an "immortal nature." Here for the first time probably in Christian literature we find the favourite phraseology of Plato: and, remembering that the writer was a student of Plato before he became a Christian, we cannot doubt the source from which it was derived.

The writer's aim is to prove the resurrection of the body: and in his effort to do this he shows much skill. His main argument is that the creative purpose of God included both soul and body; that each of these is an integral part of the man, is concerned in his actions, and therefore must share his judgment and final destiny. Some of his arguments seem to imply that the creative purpose must necessarily be accomplished; and he tells us, in ch. 25, that the end of an intelligent creature is to delight in contemplation of God. But he admits that

many men fail of this end. He does not discuss the ultimate fate of the lost; and leaves us in uncertainty whether or not all will finally be saved. His one point is to prove that in the destiny of man the body will share. In this he differs widely from Plato, who claims immortality only for the soul.

We come now to TERTULLIAN, who, in North Africa, wrote in Latin at the beginning of the third century. He accepts from Plato the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. So in ch. 3 of his treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*: "Some things are known even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many; the knowledge of God is possessed by all. I will use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato when asserting Every soul is immortal." But, as a Christian, he rejects the theory of the uncreated pre-existence of the soul. So his treatise *On the Soul*, ch. 4: "When we acknowledge that the soul originates in the breath of God, it follows that we attribute to it a beginning. This Plato refuses, representing it as not born and not made." In ch. 10 he says, "It belongs

to firm faith to say with Plato that the soul is simple, *i.e.* uniform in substance." Throughout these two works, Tertullian constantly speaks of the soul as immortal in Plato's sense of the word, and sometimes of the wicked as in endless suffering. So *Resurrection of the Flesh*, ch. 34: "We so accept the soul's immortality as to believe it lost, not in the sense of destruction but of punishment, *i.e.* in Gehenna." Also in ch. 35: "If any one supposes that the destruction of soul and flesh in Gehenna refers to an annihilation and end of both substances, as if they were to be consumed, not punished, let him remember that the fire of Gehenna is announced to be eternal, for eternal punishment, and let him recognise that eternity of killing is more to be feared than anything temporal which man could inflict." He argues, in ch. 14 of his treatise *On the Soul*, that, since the soul is simple, not composite, it cannot be dissolved or cease to be.

No one can read these two treatises of Tertullian, and compare them with earlier Christian literature, without feeling that this impulsive African has introduced into Christian literature,

or given greater prevalence to, two new and lower elements, the natural immortality of the soul and the endless torment of the lost. In the sufferings of these last he exults with fiendish delight: *On Public Exhibitions*, ch. 30. But I forbear to quote his awful lines.

Somewhat later, in a far different spirit, ORIGEN, the earliest Christian Biblical scholar, accepted the immortality of the soul, and from it inferred that all souls will ultimately be saved. In his *First Principles*, bk. iii. 13, we read: "It is not without reason then that he who is abandoned is abandoned to the Divine judgment, and that God is long-suffering with certain sinners; but because it will be for their advantage, with respect to the immortality of the soul and the unending world, that they be not quickly brought into a state of salvation, but be conducted to it more slowly, after having experienced many evils. For as physicians who are able to cure a man quickly when they suspect that a hidden poison exists in the body, do the reverse of healing, making this more certain through their very desire to heal, deeming it better to retain the patient for

a considerable time under inflammation and sickness, in order that he may recover his health more surely, rather than to appear to produce a rapid recovery, and afterwards to cause a relapse and thus that hasty cure last only for a time ; in the same way God also, who knows the secret things of the heart and foresees future events, in His longsuffering permits certain events to occur, and by means of those things which happen from without extracts the secret evil, in order to cleanse him who through carelessness has received the seeds of sin. . . . For God governs souls not with reference, let me say, to the fifty years of the present life, but with reference to the limitless age : for He made the thinking principle in its nature immortal and kindred to Himself : and the rational soul is not, as it is in this life, excluded from cure."

In the above quotations we see two practical and opposite consequences of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Tertullian inferred from it the endless suffering of the lost ; Origen inferred the ultimate salvation of all men. Each of these inferences seems to me legitimate ; and

each is prevalent now. They reveal the greatness of the issues involved in the doctrine before us.

Very perplexing is the following apparent contradiction between two closely related works of ATHANASIUS. In §§ 32, 33 of his treatise *Contra Gentes*, he speaks several times of the *soul* as *immortal*; and argues that, "just as the senses of the body, it being mortal, contemplate mortal things, so the soul, since it contemplates and takes into calculation immortal things, must necessarily also itself be *immortal* and live always." He thus reproduces the phrase and thought of Plato, as accepted by Athenagoras and Tertullian.

On the other hand, in his famous treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*, he writes as though the lost would sink into the non-existence from which originally the Creator called them. So § 4: "For the transgression of the commandment was turning them back to their natural state; so that, just as while not existing they have begun to be, so also naturally, in course of time, they may undergo corruption into non-existence. For if, being once by nature non-existent, by the coming and the philanthropy of

the Word they were called into existence, it was a consequence that men, having been emptied of thought about God and having turned away to things non-existent—for the evil things are non-existent and the good things existent, since they have come into being from the Existent God—should be emptied even of existing always. This means that they be dissolved, and remain in death and corruption. For man is by nature mortal, having come into being out of things not existing. But, because of his likeness to Him that exists, if he guard it by his contemplation of Him, he would disarm the corruption by nature and remain incorruptible."

Similarly, in § 6 he speaks of men, though made in the image of God, as disappearing and being *destroyed* in consequence of sin; and gives this as a reason for the mission and gift of the Son to save man. "It was unfitting that beings once made rational and partakers of His Word should *perish* and turn again, by corruption, into non-existence."

The only explanation of this contradiction which I can suggest is that the above incompatible

statements of doctrine reflect different types of teaching prevalent in the Church in Athanasius' day, each going, in my opinion, beyond the teaching of the Bible, viz. (1) the essential permanence of all human souls, and (2) that the destruction threatened to those who reject salvation involves ultimate loss of existence. The incompatibility of these types of teaching had apparently not arrested the attention of the youthful theologian destined to mould so greatly and so beneficially the theology of the Church of Christ.

The prevalence, in the West, of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in the sense of its essential and endless permanence, is due probably to the immense influence of AUGUSTINE. This great father was familiar with the systems of the Greek philosophers; and among them gives the palm to Plato. But he contradicts Plato's teaching that human souls are pre-existent and without beginning; and meets an argument that whatever had a beginning must also have an end. His whole teaching about the future punishment of sin rests on the assumption that the human soul is immortal. So his *City of God*,

bk. xiii. 2: "The human soul is truly affirmed to be immortal . . . it is said to be immortal because in some way it does not cease to live and feel." Similarly bk. xxi. 3: "Death will be eternal; since the soul, through not having God, will not be able to live, nor by dying to escape the pains of the body." So a little lower: "The soul can suffer pain and cannot die. Here is found a thing which, since it has sense of pain, is immortal." And much more of the same sort.

To sum up. The phrase, *the soul immortal*, so frequent and conspicuous in the writings of Plato, we have not found in pre-Christian literature outside the influence of Greek philosophy; nor have we found it in Christian literature until the latter part of the second century. We have noticed that all the earliest Christian writers who use this phrase were familiar with the teaching of Plato; that one of these, Tertullian, expressly refers both phrase and doctrine to him; and that the early Christian writers never support this doctrine by appeals to the Bible, but only by arguments similar to those of Plato. We have learnt that by this phrase

Plato and the earliest Christian writers who use it asserted the endless and essential permanence of all human souls, and appealed to this doctrine in proof of retribution beyond the grave. But we have failed to find any trace of this doctrine in the Bible. On the other hand, Christ and His Apostles teach clearly and frequently retribution beyond death, and eternal life with God for all who put faith in Christ. The hope of immortality, however, rests, in the New Testament, not on the nature of the soul, but on the "promise of life in Christ Jesus."

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul differs further from the immortality promised in the New Testament in that this last is not for the body only, as Plato taught, but for the whole man, body and soul.

Doubtless the doctrine before us was welcome in the early Church, as in a still earlier day to some devout Jews, because of the support it renders to the all-important doctrine of retribution beyond the grave. But, as we have seen, it is altogether alien, both in phrase and thought, to the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

CHAPTER IV

IMMORTALITY IN MODERN THEOLOGY

We shall now consider the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul as treated by representative modern theologians.

My first reference shall be to an excellent work well known in all Protestant Churches and nations, the *Christian Dogmatics* of Dr. Van Oosterzee.

In §§ 66–71 the writer discusses "Man's original nature." But he nowhere asserts the endless permanence of the soul. On the contrary, he says in § 68. 4, "Of the *soul* we know too little to find, by an appeal to its constitution, sufficient ground for our demonstration; we cannot even represent to ourselves this soul, or its independent continuance separated from the bodily life; and the uncertain can hardly be proved by the unknown. Throughout § 68 he

speaks of "the hope of immortality" and of "the immortality of man." This last phrase he defines to mean "not merely the continuance of life, but also of the sense of life." Dr. Oosterzee asserts clearly that the soul of man is designed by God for immortal life, and that retribution beyond the grave awaits all men, good and bad. But he does not attempt to prove that all human souls will exist and think and feel for ever.

In § 69 the writer discusses the image of God in man; and asserts that it was not destroyed, though sadly marred, by sin. He says in art. 7: "While we must regard this image as natural and capable of propagation, we must deny that it is, as something accidental, even in the least degree capable of being lost. It was not merely an ideal after which man was to strive, but actually a treasure which he was to keep, and hand over to posterity unimpaired. 'The image of God in man cannot be destroyed. Even in hell it can burn, but cannot be consumed: it may be tormented, but cannot be extirpated' (Bernard of Clairvaux). Certainly, for it forms an original element of our human nature; and

if we were wholly despoiled of it, we should then be as little men as the bird when deprived of the means of flying can bear the name of bird." This comparison leaves open the question whether the soul may ever cease to exist: for indisputably a bird may both lose its wings and by dissipation into inorganic matter cease to be in any sense a bird. Moreover, a treasure which we are bound "to keep and to hand over to posterity unimpaired" may nevertheless be lost. Yet Dr. Oosterzee seems to believe in the endless permanence of all human souls. But this is not plainly stated; and no attempt is made to prove it.

In § 149 the theory of the final restoration of all men is discussed; and we have a few words about annihilation. In art. 2 we read: "Annihilation of the incurably evil would, we readily confess, appear most acceptable to *us*, if we should give to our thoughts the highest authority in this province. For it is very difficult to conceive of an endless existence in connection with one who is entirely separated from God, the source of life, on which account

accordingly Scripture has described this condition as the second death." But this theory, if I rightly understand him, Dr. Oosterzee rejects as disproved by Rev. vi. 16, xiv. 11.

On the whole, the important doctrine of the immortality of the soul, *i.e.* the essential permanence of all human souls, though apparently assumed, is no part of the definite teaching of this volume; and the writer does nothing whatever in any way to prove it.

We come now to a work marked by deep and loving insight into the things of God and by great beauty of diction, Dr. Pope's *Compendium of Theology*. In vol. i. p. 423 we read, in reference to "the image of God in man," that "it was Essential and Indestructible: the self-conscious and self-determining personality of man, as a spirit bearing the stamp of likeness to God and capable of immortality, was the reflection in the creature of the Divine nature. . . . From beginning to end the holy record regards this image as uneffaced and ineffaceable, and still existing in every human being." This language is further explained on p. 426: "No

clearer evidence of the indestructibility of the Divine likeness could be given than that of the sanction thrown around human life; it is inviolate, *for in the image of God made He man.* Of course this does not decide the question whether or not immortality was part of the indestructible image, though it might seem that we affirm it by using the term indestructible." On this last important question the writer says nothing whatever. He seems to be unwilling to state his own opinion.

Dr. Pope returns to the immortality of the soul in vol. iii. p. 372. He says, "The immortality or continued conscious existence of man's spirit is everywhere assumed in Scripture and nowhere proved." That the spirit will survive the body is assumed or stated throughout the New Testament in terms as decisive as the clearest categorical assertion; *e.g.* in 2 Cor. v. 10, where Paul asserts that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ in order that each may receive according to his conduct on earth; similarly John v. 28, 29, Heb. ix. 27, etc. But this is very different

from assuming the endless existence of all human souls. Our author says that the immortality of man's spirit is in Scripture nowhere proved. Is the divinity of Christ proved there? It is: for in the New Testament we find decisive documentary evidence that Christ on earth claimed a superiority to men and a unique and close relation to God involving, in contrast to all mere creatures, a share of the Divine nature. But throughout the Bible we have no such proof, direct or indirect, or any clear suggestion, of the endless permanence of all human spirits. Dr. Pope adds: "The absolute immortality of the human spirit is not in question as yet." And it does not come into question throughout his work.

On p. 403, after a quotation of John v. 24–29, the writer adds: "The fuller revelation of immortality and eternal life includes, therefore, the foreannouncement of a resurrection of the whole man, and of the whole race of man, to an endless existence." But of this last all-important statement no shadow of proof is given. On p. 421 we read of "the misery of the

conscious eternal exclusion from" the vision of God; and that whatever the word eternal in Matt. xxv. 46 "means to the righteous it means also to the wicked."

On pp. 435–44 Dr. Pope discusses the theory of the annihilation of the wicked. He says: "1. The question of man's natural immortality is not allowed to be absolutely decisive; and perhaps more has been made to depend on this in the controversy than it will bear. Those who maintain that in the image of God, impressed upon man, there was a reflection in the creature of His eternity, and that this natural image was not destroyed by the Fall, are in possession of an argument which settles the matter at once. This is undoubtedly the view of Scripture, which nowhere asserts or proves the deathlessness of the human spirit any more than it asserts or proves the being of God. To us, therefore, the question is determined at the outset." Now, in Gen. i., are thirty statements which imply decisively the existence of an intelligent Creator who speaks and acts, and are therefore equivalent to categorical assertions of the existence of God;

and these are followed by innumerable similar statements throughout the Bible. But no such statements implying the deathlessness of the human spirit are to be found there.

On p. 437 we read, "It may be added that annihilation is to all intents and purposes an eternal punishment of sin committed in time." On p. 442 we read, "It must be admitted that the theologians of this new school (annihilation) have steadfastly asserted some fundamental principles. They hold fast the doctrine of the eternal punishment of sin." This is a most important admission. For the phrase *eternal punishment*, solemnly used by Christ in Mt. xxv. 46 in awful contrast to the *eternal life* awaiting the righteous, is the strongest argument from the Bible for the endless suffering of the lost. This argument is surrendered by Dr. Pope, who anticipated my volume on *The Last Things* by asserting that final extinction of men created by God for endless blessedness would be eternal punishment. (See on p. 70, a quotation from Irenæus.) He also anticipated me by endeavouring to prove that extinction of the lost is not taught in the Bible.

On p. 443 he quotes with disapproval the Rev. E. White as saying that "Christ comes not to save an immortal sinner; but to give a mortal sinner, who had sinned, the offer of immortality." But I do not see that he has brought any serious objection to the doctrine of annihilation, except by overturning, as I do, arguments in its favour. Certainly he has done nothing to prove the immortality of the soul.

Much more definite and valuable, in reference to the subject before us, than either of the works quoted above, is Dr. Laidlaw's admirable book on *The Bible Doctrine of Man*. In lecture vi. he discusses "Man's nature and a future life." On pp. 224ff. we read: "During most of the Christian centuries, the Scripture doctrine concerning the life to come has been held as bound up with and based upon that of the indestructibility of the human soul. Man is a being who must live after death, must live for ever. Conscience declares that present conduct and character are to influence an eternal hereafter. Nay, the very make of the soul tells of the timeless and changeless sphere to which it belongs. The doctrine of

the natural and necessary immortality of the human soul has been religiously cherished as of the very essence of the scriptural or Christian belief in a life to come. . . . More cautious Christian opponents of the prevailing method of identifying divine revelation as to a future life with the tenet of the soul's indestructibility have preferred to rest the doctrine of survival on the resurrection of Jesus and the affirmations of Scripture, without insisting on the soul's natural immortality. . . . The Bible does not affirm the immortality of the soul in any abstract or general form. Much less does it define the constitution of the soul as involving its necessary indestructibility. So much we may freely concede." This last is a most important concession. Throughout the volume Dr. Laidlaw does not appeal to the Bible in proof of the popular doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls. Nor does he assert plainly that he accepts this doctrine.

The writer continues: "But when it is said that the notion of a separable soul or spirit in man is unscriptural, is nothing but a philosophical

figment, and that the soul's separate existence is no necessary part of Christian belief, we are prepared on the strongest grounds to demur. . . . The personal existence of human beings after death is a doctrine that pervades the whole system of Scripture. The Bible sustains and illumines, in the most remarkable and varied ways, man's instinctive belief that he was made for an everlasting existence. . . . It would be wrong to import into these terms (*breath* and *spirit*) the metaphysical idea of an indissoluble substance, and thus commit the Scripture to the philosophical argument that the soul cannot die because it cannot be dissolved or dissipated. But the author of the Book of Wisdom seems to be fairly following the doctrine of Genesis when he says, 'For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own peculiar nature.'" With all this I heartily agree.

Dr. Laidlaw then (on page 229) distinguishes between "the Bible mode of affirming man's future existence and the methods of other religions and philosophies," especially that of Plato, "which has such close affinities with scriptural doctrine

as to have been greatly identified with Christian eschatology, elaborated by the schoolmen as the foundation of the faith, and often preached from the Christian pulpit as a substitute for the fuller light of the gospel on life and immortality." So on p. 233 : "Gradually, in Christian schools, the Greek influence prevailed, and even in the Christian Church the idea of the soul's immortality for long took the place of the Scripture doctrine of a future life." In other words, our author admits, as is proved by me in ch. i., that the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul was derived from Plato.

Dr. Laidlaw writes, on p. 240 : "This theory of 'conditional immortality,' or of the ultimate annihilation of the wicked, may claim one advantage over its rival, the theory of universal restoration. In its appeal to the certainty of future punishment and to the irrevocable character of future destiny, it is somewhat more in accordance than the other with the findings at once of conscience and of Scripture. But both theories are incompetent solutions of the awful problem which they attempt. It is obvious that

neither of them can be made to consist with the whole doctrine of Scripture as to the future of man." But the writer does not discuss the popular theory of the endless suffering of the lost, nor does he give his own interpretation of the teaching of the Bible about the future punishment of sin.

By asserting that the popular doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul—*i.e.* of the necessary and endless permanence of all human souls—has no place in the Bible, and differs from the teaching of the New Testament, and that it was derived from Plato, and by his own rejection of this doctrine as destitute of adequate proof, Dr. Laidlaw has anticipated my teaching in this volume. It is worthy of note that, while rejecting, as not taught in the Bible, the theory of conditional immortality, he does not quote any passage of Holy Scripture as contradicting it.

We come now to Dr. Salmond's volume on *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*. This title he appropriately explains in the preface, ed. 1: "It will be seen that the word 'Immortality' is used in the large sense which Paul gives it

when he speaks of 'this mortal' putting on 'immortality.' Life, eternal life, the immortality of the man, not the immortality of the soul, is the message of the Bible, alike in Old Testament and in New, in Christ and in Apostle, in John and in Paul." The writer expounds, in general agreement with the present work, the opinions of the Jews and of various ancient nations about a future life; and indicates correctly the essential difference between the teaching of Plato and that of the New Testament. He adds, on p. 126,[1] that "when Christ came, Hellenic thought ruled the world."

Dr. Salmond expounds also the teaching of Christ, the general apostolic doctrine, and the Pauline doctrine. Of Christ he says, on p. 316, "His gift to men is not the inculcation of the truth of an endless existence, not any dogma of the soul's deathless perpetuity, but the revelation of a higher life, and the inspiration of a hope stronger than any speculation, sacredly governing conduct, and accessible to the humblest soul." Of Paul he says, on p. 458, "He never

[1] The references are to the fourth edition, just published.

contemplates a simple immortality of soul ; he never argues for man's survival merely on the ground that there is a mind or spirit in him." It is quite clear that, in Dr. Salmond's view, the Bible does not teach the endless permanence of all human souls. This last doctrine, which has occupied so large a place in popular theology, he passes over almost in silence.

Of "the doctrine of Annihilation" our author says, on p. 473, that, "It had a large and well-understood place in pre-Christian speculation. It assumed different shapes, and was taught in different interests in the faiths and philosophies of the old world." He thus admits, in harmony with ch. ii. of this book, that Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul was far from universal in the ancient world.

On p. 474 Dr. Salmond says, in my opinion justly, that the advocates of conditional immortality have overstated their case by claiming as on their side the earliest Christian writers. But he mistranslates his most important quotation in proof of the endless suffering or the lost, viz. words attributed to Polycarp in ch. xi. of the

Epistle of the Church at Smyrna, which should be, not "perpetual torment of eternal fire," but "the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment;" same words as in Mt. xxv. 46. The same mistranslation is given in Dr. Pusey's *Eternal Punishment*, p. 153.

Our author says, on p. 475, that Irenæus "speaks also of 'immortal souls' and of the 'eternal' duration of punishments." But unfortunately Dr. Salmond does not say where Irenæus uses these phrases. Possibly he refers to the two passages mentioned on p. 42 of this book. Irenæus frequently quotes Mt. xxv. 41, "perpetual" or "eternal fire;" *e.g.* bks. iv. 28. 2, iii. 23. 3; but so far as I have noticed he does not expound the meaning of the word *eternal* in this verse or in *v.* 46. On the other hand, he argues, in bk. v. 27. 2, as I do on p. 176 of my *Last Things*, that "the good things from God being eternal and endless, the privation of them also is, for this reason, *eternal and endless*:" αἰώνιος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος. Notice that here the word *endless* is added to the word *eternal* as a description of the loss of endless blessing.

This suggests strongly that the words were not synonymous ; for otherwise the addition would be meaningless tautology.

In contending against the theory of conditional immortality, Dr. Salmond sometimes betrays a disposition to accept the doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls. He quotes with approval, on p. 487, a writer who says that "the notion of a soul immortal enough to live through death, but not immortal enough to live for ever, is too childish to be entertained beyond the little school of literalists who delight in it." Again, on p. 497, he asks : "If man is not inherently immortal, why should the sinful man subsist at all after death ?" The answer to this question is easy. God has decreed that, whatever a man sows, this he shall also reap. And, because for this reaping there is not space in the present life, He has decreed that after death comes judgment, this last involving conscious existence at least for a time. But this moral necessity for the survival of the wicked affords no proof or presumption that they will abide for ever in suffering. For, though we can see a moral

necessity for judgment after death, we can conceive no moral ends to be served by endless permanence of evil in this awful form, an irremovable blemish on the rescued and glorified universe of God. Certainly the above suggestion is not absurd. It has been vindicated as legitimate by not a few modern theologians who cannot be dismissed as "childish."

An all-important point in Dr. Salmond's book is that while evidently disliking the doctrine of the ultimate extinction of the wicked, and apparently favouring the traditional doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls, this involving endless suffering of the lost, he does not state plainly his own belief. Certainly he brings no proof from the Bible or elsewhere for the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul. He thus affords strong presumption that it is not taught there, and that it does not rest on any reliable evidence.

That in a work on "The Christian Doctrine of Immortality" the writer does not discuss or mention the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, which has exerted so remarkable an

influence on all Christian thought, is a serious defect in this interesting volume.

Dr. Welldon, bishop of Calcutta, in his attractive book on *The Hope of Immortality*, endeavours to say something for the immortality of the soul without appealing to the Bible. But he is not very sure of his ground. For, on p. 3, he writes: "I do not aspire to prove Immortality, but to make it probable." His doubt is far-reaching. For, on p. 5, he says: "No historical fact is certain." And he fears (see p. 10) that his book may leave his readers "in some uncertainty;" a probable consequence which, strange to say, he does not regret.

Dr. Welldon defines clearly, on p. 57, the opinion he endeavours to make probable. "The soul is immortal, i.e. everlasting. It does not merely survive death; it survives everlastingly. It survives in virtue of the character which distinguishes it from all that is dissoluble and destructible." Again, on p. 63 he writes: "The soul which lives after death is not only spiritual but emotional and rational. It is the whole immaterial part of man. It survives and

survives eternally in the fulness of its intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers.

The third chapter, on "The Value of the Belief," is an able and beautiful statement of the moral worth of a belief that beyond the grave endless reward awaits the righteous. In chs. iv. and v. the writer adduces the evidences, external and internal, for immortality. Unfortunately, in so doing, he omits, as outside the scope of his work, the one ground on which the Christian hope rests securely, viz. the promise of life in Christ Jesus with its historical and experimental credentials. This omission is most serious. For Dr. Welldon's book leaves the impression that this hope rests only on what he admits to be the uncertain grounds here adduced. Whenever these outlying proofs are brought forward, they ought to be supplemented by the more solid proof given to us in Christ. The evidence adduced is halting and uncertain. So far as it goes it affords a probability that man will survive death. And this survival the writer accepts as proof or presumption of the truth of his main thesis, viz. that all human souls will,

in virtue of their nature, survive for ever ; thus confounding survival with endless survival.

The last chapter discusses "The Christian Amplification of the Belief in Immortality." Like some other writers, Dr. Welldon says: "Christianity does not prove immortality. It assumes immortality ; or to speak exactly, it breathes a spiritual atmosphere in which the assumption of immortality is felt to be natural or even necessary." This is a terrible understatement. For Christ and His Apostles asserted again and again in plainest language that eternal life awaits all who put faith in Him : and in proof of this assertion God raised Him from the dead. Consequently the Christian hope of immortality rests, not on the uncertain grounds adduced in this book, but on the sure word of our risen Lord.

On p. 342 we read : "Of Hell, as it is called, and of the disciplinary process to which unhallowed souls are subjected when this life is ended, it is impossible to form a conception save through the contrast in which it stands to the beatific state ; for it has not been the will of God to

reveal more than its mere shadowy outline." Dr. Welldon suggests the hope that "when the soul stands at the judgment-bar, the misery of sin, the pain of loss, the burning sense of all that might have been and yet is not and may never be, above all the ever present consciousness of alienation from Him to whom man's spiritual being tends unceasingly, will be an agony so sharp and subtle as to extort an exceeding bitter cry for the pardon and peace of Heaven."

Although Dr. Welldon asserts, *e.g.* on p. 349, that "immortality is the inalienable prerogative of man," his essay affords fair presumptive proof that this is not taught in the Bible; which is my contention in this volume. What degree of probability he has claimed for his assertion, his readers will judge.

The last book to which I shall refer, as defending the immortality of the soul, is a most attractive and in many respects excellent volume on *Christian Theology* recently published by an American theologian, Dr. W. N. Clarke. He asserts, on p. 192, that "MAN IS IMMORTAL, that is to say, the human personality is undying. The spirit

is the person, and what is here affirmed is that the human spirit, with its essential powers in which it resembles God, is destined to live on endlessly. A human being will never cease to be a human being." But, for this statement, he does not quote Holy Scripture. On p. 198 he writes: "The influence of Jesus certainly has supported in Christians the conviction that all men live for ever; for among Christians this belief has been held, with only occasional variations, not merely as a natural conviction but as a Christian certainty. Christ does not affirm in so many words that all men live for ever, but He powerfully teaches it by His attitude and mode of appeal to men."

On pp. 450–453 Dr. Clarke refers to the doctrine of conditional immortality; but without approval. He denies a bodily return of Christ and a judgment at the end of the world. So p. 458: "If the coming of Christ is conceived as spiritual, not visible, and as a process, not an event, a change in one's idea of the resurrection will necessarily follow. If no visible descent of Christ is looked for, no simultaneous resurrection

of humanity on the earth will be expected. If we accept the view of Christ's coming that has been expressed on previous pages, we shall naturally think that each human being's resurrection takes place at his death, and consists in the rising of the man from death to life in another realm of life. . . . According to this view resurrection is not simultaneous for all, but continuous, or successive ; and for no human being is there any intervening period of disembodiment." How far removed this teaching is from that of the New Testament, I have in my volume on *The Last Things* endeavoured to prove.

In his discussion of final destinies, on pp. 474–480, Dr. Clarke expresses a hope that for most or for all men there may be probation and salvation beyond the grave. On p. 477 he reminds us that "there are passages in the New Testament in which there seems to be hope that God will yet gain the love and devotion of all souls. There arises also the question whether God would not be just so far defeated if an endless dualism were established in His universe by the endless sway of sin over a part of His

intelligent creatures. From such considerations comes the hope of many that God will finally bring all souls from sin to holiness." So on p. 478: "It is hard to believe that God indefinitely perpetuates suffering that is not useful."

These two volumes, by Bishop Welldon and Dr. Clarke, reveal the natural tendency of the doctrine of the immortality of all human souls. They who believe that to every man God has given an intelligence which, whatever he may do, will for an endless succession of ages know and feel, may well be pardoned if they cherish a hope that this imperishable gift will be to him, not an endless curse, but ultimately an endless blessing. Thus, as with Origen in the third century, so with many now, Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul has been the parent of a doctrine of universal salvation. They also illustrate the danger involved in adding to the theology of the Church, even in the supposed interests of the Christian life, doctrines not taught in the Bible. We have no right to go beyond the plain and abundant teaching of the Sacred Book. And, to do so, is perilous in the extreme.

To sum up. Of the six modern works quoted in this chapter, not one attempts to prove from the Bible, although some of them endeavour to prove in other ways, or assume without proof, the endless permanence of all human souls. This affords a presumption hardly distinguishable from certainty that this doctrine is not directly or indirectly taught in the Holy Scriptures. And in a matter pertaining altogether to the unseen world, other proof is worthless. It may therefore be dismissed as no part of the Gospel of Christ.

The most conspicuous protest in our time against the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in the sense of the endless survival of all human souls, is that made by the Rev. Edward White in his *Life in Christ*, published in 1875, a third edition, revised and enlarged, in 1877. This bold protest rendered great service by claiming a reconsideration of the whole subject. It was, however, in my view, weakened by the writer's endeavour to prove that the Bible teaches the ultimate extinction of the lost, thus himself

going, as I think, beyond the teaching of Holy Scripture in another direction. Mr. White's book also lies open to objection on sundry matters of detail. But, in spite of all this, it remains a most honourable protest against prevalent and popular error.

The teaching of Mr. White is ably supported by Dr. E. Petavel, of Lausanne, in a very useful volume entitled *The Problem of Immortality*.

A very remarkable and valuable protest against the same doctrine is found in Gladstone's *Studies subservient to the works of Bishop Butler*. On p. 142 the writer calls attention to the two meanings, frequently confused or identified, *e.g.* by Bishop Welldon quoted above, of the phrase *immortality of the soul*, viz. its survival of death or its endless survival. He points out that Butler's argument in his *Analogy*, pt. i. ch. 7, "is a plea not for immortality, properly so called, but for persistence of life as against the special occasion of death. . . . There are those who say these two things, survival and immortality, are but one; and who seem to suppose that the case of surmounting death is like that of obtaining

a passport which will carry us over the frontier of some foreign country ; where, this once done, we have no other impediment to apprehend. But, on such an assumption of the identity of survival with immortality, it is to be observed that it is a pure assumption, and nothing more. We have no title to postulate *in limine* that powers, which may be so adjusted or equipped as to face the contingency of death, must therefore be in all respects such as to be certain of facing with a like impunity every other contingency which, for aught we know, the dimness of the future may enfold in its ample bosom. Such questions may remain open, and without prejudice for independent discussion."

Mr. Gladstone denies strongly, and again and again, that the Bible ever teaches, in the proper sense of the phrase, the immortality of the soul. So, on p. 197f. : "Another consideration of the highest importance is that the natural immortality of the soul is a doctrine wholly unknown to the Holy Scriptures, and standing on no higher plane than that of an ingeniously sustained, but gravely and formidably contested, philosophical opinion.

And surely there is nothing, as to which we ought to be more on our guard, than the entrance into the precinct of Christian doctrine, either without authority or by an abuse of authority, of philosophical speculations disguised as truths of Divine Revelation. They bring with them a grave restraint on mental liberty ; but what is worse is, that their basis is a pretension essentially false, and productive by rational retribution of other falsehoods. Under these two heads, we may perhaps find that we have ample warrant for declining to accept the tenet of natural immortality as a truth of Divine Revelation."

Contrast this plain statement, which, if untrue, may be disproved by one quotation from the Bible, with the equivocal language quoted above from writers who assert, or assume, or do not deny, the doctrine in question.

The venerable statesman denies that this doctrine was taught in the earliest age of the Church. So on p. 184 : " The secret of this mental freedom, the condition which made it possible, was the absence from the scene of any doctrine of a natural immortality inherent to the

soul. Absent it may be termed, for all practical purposes, until the third century; for though it was taught by Tertullian in connexion with the Platonic ideas, it was not given forth as belonging to the doctrine of Christ or His Apostles. . . . It seems to me as if it were from the time of Origen that we are to regard the idea of natural, as opposed to that of Christian, immortality as beginning to gain a firm foothold in the Christian Church." This is an important confirmation of ch. iii. of this volume.

On p. 188f. we read, "It seems indisputable that the materials for the opinion that the soul is by nature immortal, whether we call it dogma or hypothesis, were for a long period in course of steady accumulation; though this was not so from the first. After some generations, however, the mental temper and disposition of Christians inclined more and more to its reception. Without these assumptions it would be impossible to account for the wholesale change which has taken place in the mind of Christendom with regard to the subject of natural immortality. It would be difficult, I think, to name any other subject

connected with religious belief (though not properly belonging to it) on which we can point to so sweeping and absolute a revolution of opinion, from the period before Origen, when the idea of an immortality properly natural was unknown or nearly hidden, to the centuries of the later Middle Ages and of modern time, when, at least in the West, it had become practically undisputed and universal."

In further agreement with p. 52 of this book, Mr. Gladstone says on p. 191 : "It seems, however, to be generally felt that the determining epoch in the history of seminal Christian thought upon this subject was the life of St. Augustine, together with that period following closely upon it, when the Western Church became rapidly imbued with his theology in almost its entire compass."

Canon Gore, in vol. ii. pp. 210–214 of his recent work on *The Epistle to the Romans*, accepts without modification the teaching in Gladstone's *Studies* and in my own volume on *The Last Things* in reference both to the future punishment of sin and the immortality of the soul. On

p. 212 he writes: "Careful attention to the origin of the doctrine of the necessary immortality or indestructibility of each human soul, as stated for instance by Augustine or Aquinas, will probably convince us that it was no part of the original Christian message, or of really catholic doctrine. It was rather a speculation of Platonism taking possession of the Church. And this consideration leaves open possibilities of the ultimate extinction of personal consciousness in the lost, which Augustinianism somewhat rudely closed."

The writer protests, as I do, against the assertion "that the souls of the lost will be at the last extinguished. These positive positions are no more justified than those of our forefathers which we have deprecated. We must recognize the limits of positive knowledge."

This confirmation, by a theologian so eminent as Canon Gore, of the protest now restated and amplified in this book is of utmost value. And against it I know nothing. So far as I have read, no modern writer has done anything whatever to prove, from the Bible or in any other

way, the endless permanence of the human soul. This is strong presumptive evidence that no valid proof of this doctrine can be brought ; and thus confirms my contention in ch. ii. that it was not taught by Christ.

CHAPTER V

PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES. THE DOOM OF THE LOST

We have now traced the popular and traditional doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls to the teaching of Plato and to the school of Greek philosophers of which he is the most illustrious representative; and have endeavoured to prove that it was altogether alien from the phrase and thought of Christ and His Apostles so far as His teaching and theirs are embodied in the New Testament, and that it entered into, and subsequently became prevalent in, the Church mainly through the influence of Plato, apparently in the latter part of the second century. We have also considered the teaching of several modern theologians, but have not found any one who seriously endeavours to prove that the immortality of the soul is taught in the Bible.

In this chapter I shall discuss a few passages in the Bible which shed some light on the nature of the human soul, the inferences we may fairly draw from them, and the bearing of these inferences and of the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul on Christian thought, and especially on the ultimate doom of those who reject the Gospel of Christ.

In Gen. i. 26 man is raised conspicuously above all other creatures of God by the deliberate purpose, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness," and by his destination to "rule among the fish of the sea and among the birds of the heaven and among the cattle and in all the earth;" by the careful and repeated statement in *v.* 27 of the accomplishment of this purpose; and by the blessing and command in *v.* 28. It is worthy of note that in ch. ix. 6, even after the fall, and again in Jas. iii. 9, man is still said to be made in the likeness of God. All this calls attention to the superiority of man to the other animals: and this superiority resides chiefly, though not exclusively, in the soul of man.

The unique superiority of man, both body and

soul, is further emphasized in ch. ii. 7, where he is said to have been formed out of dust by a definite act of God, and his soul is attributed to a special inbreathing of life from God.

That even fallen man is described as still made in the image of God, implies that this image was not altogether lost by sin. And we notice that man's intelligence and self-determination survived the fall. On the other hand, we read in Col. iii. 10 that "the new man is renewed for knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him." This suggests irresistibly that the image of God included a moral likeness to the Creator.

Upon this image of God, light is shed by Rom. viii. 29: "Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he may be Firstborn among many brethren." We have here the eternal Father contemplating the eternal Son with absolute satisfaction, and resolving, before the world was, to surround Him with later born sons who, in created human form, will bear His image. In consequence of man's sin, this creative purpose

involved the suffering and death of the eternal Archetype. But, when Paul wrote, the price had been paid; and he announces the coming accomplishment of the original creative purpose.

Casual references in the Old Testament, *e.g.* Eccl. iii. 21, xii. 7, Job xxxii. 8, call attention to the dignity of man's spirit and to its essential superiority to the life of animals. But they do nothing to prove or suggest its endless permanence when, through man's obdurate disobedience, God's purpose of mercy towards the individual has been finally frustrated. For, throughout the New Testament, the eternal life promised by Christ is made conditional on faith and obedience: just as, in Gen. ii. 17, continuance of the life given in Paradise is made conditional on obedience to a specific Divine command.

Some Christian writers have endeavoured to support the doctrine that all human souls will think and feel for ever by metaphysical arguments derived, like those of Plato, from its immaterial and uncompounded nature. Others have suggested that, since sin is utterly against the creative purpose of God, its ultimate result must be to

extinguish the rational existence which He has given. All such arguments seem to me valueless. For life and reason and sin are to us insoluble mysteries. Certainly He who out of nothing called the reasoning soul of man can, if He will, send it back to the non-existence from which it came. But the destruction threatened to those who reject the salvation offered by Christ is no proof that He will do so. For in many cases objects said to be *destroyed* (see p. 32) evidently continue to exist without prospect of extinction. Our only sources of knowledge touching the ultimate destinies of men are the historic revelations from God recorded in the Bible and especially the supreme revelation given to us in Christ and recorded in the New Testament.

The Bible teaches clearly that man as created was destined by God to share His endless blessedness. But this by no means implies that every man will exist for ever even when existence has become an unmixed curse.

The real significance of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is its bearing on the

ultimate destiny of the wicked. This solemn subject demands now brief consideration.

The only clear passage in the Old Testament on this topic is Dan. xii. 2: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame, to eternal abhorrence."

Throughout the New Testament, *e.g.* Mt. vii. 13, 14, xxv. 32–46, John iii. 16, v. 29, Rom. ii. 7–12, 2 Th. i. 7–9, Rev. xx. 12–15, we read of two paths, one leading to life eternal, and the other to destruction. This last denotes, as we saw on p. 31, utter ruin, the loss of all that gives worth to existence, whether or not the lost object ceases to exist or continues in a worthless existence.

Some other passages speak of this ruin as final. So Ph. iii. 19, "whose end is destruction;" 2 Cor. xi. 15, "ministers of Satan, whose end will be according to their works;" Heb. vi. 8, "whose end is to be burnt." Finality is also implied in the frequent metaphor of the destruction of vegetable matter by fire. So Mt. iii. 12, "the chaff He will *burn-up* with fire unquenchable;"

ch. xiii. 30, "collect first the tares, and bind them into bundles, to *burn* them *up*;" *v.* 40, "just as then the tares are gathered together and *burnt-up* with fire, so shall it be at the completion of the age." This metaphor implies finality. For no one who had any hope or thought of their ultimate restoration could compare the doom of the wicked to chaff or weeds cast into the fire and there *burnt-up*. Finality is also implied in Mt. xxvi. 24: "Good were it for him if that man had not been born." For if endless blessedness, even in some cases after long suffering, were the ultimate destiny of all men, existence would in every case be an ultimate blessing. These passages prove that universal salvation was far from the thought of their writers.

Other passages speak of the acute suffering of the lost. So Mt. viii. 12, xiii. 42, 50, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51, xxv. 30, Luke xiii. 28: "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Also ch. xvi. 23, 24, 25: "lifted up his eyes being in torments. . . . I am in anguish in this flame." But in these places nothing is said about the duration of the suffering.

The only passages in the Bible which suggest the endless suffering of the lost are the following :—

We have Dan. xii. 2, already quoted : "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame, to eternal *abhorrence*." This last word is found also in Isa. lxvi. 24, as a description of the corpses of the wicked : "They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." It describes, not suffering, which is far removed from our thought of a corpse, but the horror produced in the beholders. Such horror may continue, as a memory, long after the object which evoked it has passed away ; but not after the object has been restored. The above passage cannot therefore be appealed to in proof of the endless suffering of the lost.

In Mt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41, we read of "eternal (or age-lasting) fire." But this does not imply the endlessness of that which is cast into the fire. Indeed the same words are used in Jude 7 to describe the fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah : "they lie before us as a pattern, undergoing just punishment of *eternal fire*." The

fire was *age-lasting* in the sense that the desolation wrought by it lay before the eyes of Israel for long *ages*.

Another terrible picture of the future punishment of sin is found in Mark ix. 43–48. Our Lord here bids His hearers to make any sacrifice, even surrender hand or foot or eye, rather than "go away into Gehenna." This last word, He at once expounds by the addition, "to the fire unquenchable." In a second warning we have simply the phrase "cast into Gehenna." In a third, we have the same phrase with the remarkable addition, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

This last phrase recalls at once Isa. lxvi. 24, referred to above. The prophet sees a new heaven and a new earth. Yet, amid that glory, the glorified ones will go forth and behold the corpses of those who have sinned. The words before us suggest continuance of the awful spectacle. For, if there were no corpses to feed upon, the worm would die: and, if there were no fuel, the fire would be extinguished.

The easiest explanation of these words in

Mark ix. 48 is that they were added to convey the idea of intense suffering, like that caused by the gnawing of a worm or by fire. For we have here no mention of "corpses." But the change from "will not die . . . will not be quenched" in Isa. lxvi. 24 to the present tense in Mark ix. 48, "their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched," suggests continuous suffering in the present rather than endless suffering in the future. This change of tense and the difficulty of the metaphor forbid us to rely upon this passage as an assertion of the endless torment of the lost.

Very conspicuous is the solemn announcement in Mt. xxv. 46, "these shall go away into *eternal punishment*, but the righteous into eternal life." We have already seen, on p. 29, that the word *eternal* denotes *age-lasting*, and is frequently in the Septuagint applied to objects whose duration is by no mean endless. But its precise meaning in this passage is immaterial, because other passages in the New Testament imply, as we shall see, that the punishment of the wicked will be endless. This meaning how-

ever lies, not in the word, but in other New Testament teaching.

We now ask, Does *age-lasting punishment* involve age-lasting suffering? Already we have seen that in the Synoptist Gospels the punishment of the wicked includes acute suffering. And indisputably the word *age-lasting* describes the duration of the punishment, or at least of its effect. But the future punishment of sin will include, not only actual suffering, but loss of the endless blessedness for which all men were created. Consequently, whether or not the suffering continues, the punishment will be as lasting as the life forfeited. For punishment does not cease till the punished one is restored to the condition in which he would have been if he had not sinned. Consequently we need not fear the paradox that a man may be undergoing punishment even after he has ceased to exist: for, if loss of existence be a judicially inflicted consequence of sin, it is itself a punishment. Similarly, the civil penalty of death is not measured by the pain inflicted but by the loss of life. No one thinks, apart from

retribution beyond the grave, that the punishment is over when the criminal is dead. This is well put by Augustine in his *City of God*, book xxi. 11: "He who for some great crime is punished with death, do the laws reckon his punishment by the space of time in which he is put to death, which is very brief, and not by this, that he is removed for ever from the society of the living?" *In sempiternum auferunt de societate viventium.* Just so, whatever becomes of the lost, their punishment continues so long as they are not restored to the favour and life of God. In other words, the phrase *eternal punishment* does not imply, and the verse before us does not assert, endless suffering. So Dr. Pope, quoted on p. 62.

A still more tremendous vision of punishment is found in Rev. xiv. 9–11: "If any one worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, also he shall drink of the wine of the fury of God." These last words describe the stupifying effect of this punishment. The strange collocation of words following, "which is mixed unmixed

in the cup of His anger," suggests a combination of different elements together with undiluted intensity. This terrible description of suffering is then strengthened by a change of metaphor: they shall be tormented with fire and sulphur." A visible memento of suffering is seen in "the smoke of their torment;" and we are told that "for ages of ages" it "goes up." Even this does not close the awful picture. A few more words take us almost into that sulphurous flame, and reveal the ceaseless unrest of the sufferers there: "and they have no rest day and night." An announcement of suffering so terrible requires careful specification of the sufferers: "who worship the wild beast and his image, and if any one receives the mark of his name."

This passage suggests perhaps, but does not expressly assert, the endless suffering of the persons whose doom is thus described. For the smoke may go up even when the suffering of which it is a visible memento has ceased.

Age-lasting torment is asserted in Rev. xx. 10: "The devil was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, where are the wild beast and the false

prophet: and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of the ages." But these words refer not to men, but to persons or abstractions whose active sin has been age-lasting. These two passages, in highly figurative language, from the most obscure book in the Bible, a book whose origin is veiled in insoluble mystery, are a very unsafe foundation for important Christian doctrine.

It may be admitted that the above passages, or some of them, suggest, if they do not assert, the endless suffering of the lost. We now ask, Are they sufficient to justify a confident assertion that those excluded from the City of God will undergo endless suffering? For the following reasons, I think not.

We find in the New Testament other passages which, taken by themselves, suggest, or seem to assert, doctrines which we are compelled to reject. To thousands of devout men Rom. viii. 29, ix. 14–23, Eph. i. 4, 5, John xv. 16, have seemed to assert the doctrine of unconditional election and predestination, now almost universally repudiated. And Mt. xvi. 27, 28, xxiv. 34,

seem to assert that Christ would come to judge the world during the lifetime of those around Him. These passages are quite as clear, in a sense we cannot accept, as are any which seem to assert the endless suffering of the lost. They warn us not to accept, especially in proof of a doctrine open to serious objection, a few texts from the Bible. All the great doctrines of the Gospel are supported by abundant and decisive teaching of Holy Scripture. And no doctrine ought to be asserted with confidence unless thus supported.

Moreover, against this doctrine may be set other passages as clear and as numerous as those quoted above.

In Mt. iii. 12, the Baptist says, "The chaff He will *burn-up* with fire unquenchable;" similarly *v.* 10, "cast into the fire." This teaching is confirmed by Christ, who says in ch. xiii. 30, "At the time of the harvest I shall say to the reapers, Gather first the tares and bind them into bundles to *burn* them *up*." Notice here twice and again in *v.* 40 the strong word κατακαύσει. It suggests irresistibly the extinction of the

objects *burnt-up*. For no process known to us is more like annihilation than is the destruction of vegetable matter by fire; whereas it has nothing in common with endless suffering. The same metaphor is found in John xv. 6, Heb. vi. 8. These passages, I do not quote in proof of the ultimate extinction of the lost; but only to show how serious are the consequences of building important doctrine on a few verses of the Bible.

Equally opposed to the traditional doctrine of the endless suffering of the lost is another group of passages, viz. those which assert or imply the universal reign of Christ. So Isa. xlv. 23, quoted in Rom. xiv. 11 as including both Jews and Gentiles: "As I live, says the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow; and every tongue shall confess to God." This great prophecy, a categorical and solemn assertion, refers evidently to the willing homage of happy souls. It cannot be fulfilled in the endless wail of the lost. The same may be said of the purpose expressed in Ph. ii. 10: "That at the name of Jesus every knee may bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Similarly 1 Cor. xv. 28: "The Son Himself shall be subjected to Him who subjected all things to Him, in order that God may be all things in all." These two passages describe the ultimate aim of the work of Christ. And, although the accomplishment of this purpose of infinite blessing is contingent, in reference to each individual, on his own personal submission to Christ, it is in the last degree unlikely that this Divine purpose of universal homage to Christ will be for ever frustrated.

Certainly these two groups of passages, from all four Gospels and from the undisputed epistles of Paul, are equal in number and weight to the passages from the Synoptist Gospels only and the Book of Revelation which suggest or seem to imply the endless suffering of the lost. Viewed in the light of the two other groups, this last group is an altogether unsafe foundation for confident assertion in God's name that those condemned in the great day will undergo endless suffering.

Notice now the extreme seriousness of the

popular doctrine which in this book I have discussed. If we accept as indisputable truth, as it has been accepted during fifteen centuries, the doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls, the few and uncertain passages, quoted above, which suggest or seem to assert the endless suffering of the lost are reinforced by the more numerous and much more decisive passages which assert or imply the finality of their doom, *e.g.* Ph. iii. 19, 2 Cor. xi. 15, Heb. vi. 8, 1 Pet. iv. 17, Mt. xxvi. 24, Mark xiv. 21, and those which compare the doom of the lost to the destruction of vegetable matter by fire. In other words, the doctrine before us leaves open only one alternative, either the endless suffering of the lost or their ultimate restoration to the favour of God and eternal life.

Not only against the endless torment of the lost, as our fathers taught it, but against any form of endless suffering, or of an endless prolongation of an existence which is only a helpless consciousness of utter ruin, the moral sense of thousands of intelligent and devout men and women is in stern revolt. The more care-

fully they consider it, the less are they able to harmonize it with the infinite love, or even with the justice, of God. To such persons, it is useless to say that they are unable to estimate the evil of sin, and the punishment it deserves. For, amid human fallibility and error, there is in man an inborn sense of justice and of the due proportion of sin and punishment which, in all ages, has been recognized as a reflection, imperfect but real, of the justice of God. There are children of ten years old who, if told that their father had punished another child, however naughty, by burning him to death, would at once and justly repudiate the statement with indignation. Moreover, the picture of Christ in the New Testament, and His teaching as recorded there, claim and secure the homage of the moral sense of man, and this homage paid by that in us which is noblest and best to the teaching and character of Christ is the most powerful proof of His divine excellence. A doctrine which, instead of gaining the homage of our moral sense, drives it into revolt, has no moral authority over us. Man's sense of right

and wrong needs to be educated ; and at best is fallible. But, as taught by Paul in Rom. ii. 14, 15, it is a divine transcript of the Law of God ; and as such, it cannot be silenced even by quotation from the Holy Scriptures.

The practical consequence is that not a few, assuming as not open to question, that every human soul will think and feel for ever, have been driven to hope and expect that all men will ultimately be received into the abode of the blessed. Thus, as with Origen, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has been the parent of universalism. In other words, this doctrine closes a way of escape from serious difficulty which the Bible leaves open to us. By so doing, it has driven many to force a way violently through a door which the Sacred Writers do not leave open.

We will now, after eliminating the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, restate briefly the teaching of the New Testament about the future punishment of sin.

The various writers of the New Testament and Christ as His words are there recorded divide

the human race at the last judgment into two widely separated classes. The one class will be received into a glory on which falls no shadow; the other will be banished into a darkness in which we look in vain for one ray of light. Between these classes stands an impassable barrier. To our view, this dual division presents serious difficulties. It finds no place for a large number of persons who seem to us unworthy of either blessedness or destruction. This difficulty, the New Testament does nothing to remove or mitigate. Christ promises to all who put faith in Him eternal happiness; but, having said all that is needful for our salvation, He does nothing to satisfy our curiosity about the destiny of the persons just referred to. We must leave them to the wisdom and love of our Father in heaven.

The various writers of the New Testament describe the punishment to be inflicted on the great day as ruin, utter, hopeless, and final. The Synoptist Gospels also represent Christ as teaching, and the Book of Revelation teaches, in plain and awful language, that the lost will suffer acute and continuous pain. This actual suffering is

implied in the teaching, by Paul and other writers, that retribution will be according to works. For proportionate retribution involves degrees of punishment: and degrees of punishment imply consciousness; for unconsciousness is alike to all. Moreover, consciousness of endless and glorious life forfeited through our own inexcusable folly and sin involves remorse and mental anguish beyond conception. To be compelled, in the unsparing light of eternity, to contemplate our own past sins, when all fascination of sin has worn away, and our rejection of the infinite love of God and our consequent and deserved loss of the glories of heaven, and this without room for amendment or hope of restoration, will be an undying worm and unquenchable fire. In other words, the vivid pictures in the Synoptist Gospels and in the Book of Revelation do but delineate a necessary inference from teaching permeating the entire New Testament.

Of this acute suffering, the writers of the New Testament see no end; nor do they teach anything which logically implies that it will ever end On the other hand, they do not go

so far as expressly and indisputably to assert the endless permanence of these ruined and wretched ones, and the consequent endlessness of their torment. The curtain is raised for a moment, revealing the anguish of the lost; and then falls, hiding them from our view.

This picture of judgment reveals to us intelligent persons created by God in order that they may share His endless blessedness, yet, through their own sin and their rejection of salvation from sin, shut out, without hope of return, from the glory and happiness for which they were created.

To this teaching, no objection can be made on the ground of the character of God. It cannot be objected that His purpose will be defeated. For His purpose in creating man was to surround the eternal Son with later born sons who by their own free choice have accepted Him as their Lord. This purpose will find eternal and glorious realization. Nor can we object to the doom of the lost as unjust. For of no one case are all the facts before us. We know not the greatness of the sins which will be punished by exclusion

from the glory of God; and therefore cannot compare the sin and punishment. The analogy of parental and royal love forbids us to say that the love of God is inconsistent with severe punishment of sin, or indeed with the final exclusion of sinners from the happy family of God. On the other hand, the principles of human justice warn us not to put into the threatenings of the New Testament more than its words legitimately convey.

The above teaching may be traced by decisive documentary evidence to the pen of the Apostles and Evangelists and to the lips of Christ.

This teaching has, in ancient and modern times, been supplemented or limited in three directions by other teaching about the ultimate destiny of the wicked.

1. To the pictures of actual suffering found in the New Testament, the traditional teaching of the Church has added the assertion that this suffering will be endless. This addition is a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul unconsciously borrowed, as we have seen, from Greek philosophy.

From the days of Tertullian to days remembered by men still living, imagination ran riot in depicting the physical sufferings of the lost and comparing them to the excruciating bodily pain caused by fire. In recent days, others have recoiled from bodily *torment* and have put the word *suffering* in its place. But the word *torment* is found in the New Testament as a description of the future punishment of sin. Moreover, it is difficult or impossible to conceive a lost and ruined soul, in full possession of consciousness, knowing itself to be finally shut out from the City of God in just punishment of inexcusable sin, otherwise than as in unspeakable misery.

Now all will admit that no theory about the future punishment of sin ought to be put forth as revealed truth unless supported by clear and abundant teaching of the Bible. This theory, which in many minds lies open to most serious objection, has, as I have endeavoured to show, no adequate support in Holy Scripture. And, from the nature of the case, it can have no adequate support elsewhere.

2. Others, especially in recent times, have added to, and limited, the teaching of the New Testament by endeavouring to prove that the suffering therein depicted will ultimately, after different degrees of suffering in proportion to different degrees of guilt, be lost in unconsciousness. This theory maintains the finality of the punishment of the wicked, and at the same time avoids the difficulties involved in the endlessness of their suffering and the consequently endless permanence of evil. It finds some support in the metaphor, not uncommon in the New Testament, of the destruction of vegetable matter by fire to describe the doom of the ungodly, and indeed in the word *destruction*, frequently used by Plato to describe the extinction of the soul, which he denies. But this metaphor and this use of the word *destruction* seem to me an altogether insufficent ground for definite assertion. This second theory is but a human attempt to remove a difficulty which the New Testament leaves unsolved.

3. Others have not only gone beyond the New Testament, but have as I think contradicted it,

by asserting with more or less confidence that all men will ultimately be saved. This last theory has found some support in passages which speak of the ultimate and universal triumph of good, taken in connection with the traditional assumption of the indestructibility of the human soul. But, as we have seen, this assumption is without foundation. And this theory, destitute of solid foundation, is, in various ways, directly and indirectly contradicted in the New Testament.

The theory of a probation beyond death, of which we have no reliable indication in the Bible, has no practical bearing on the ultimate destiny of those who die in sin. For a further probation involves a possibility of further failure. And this brings back, in full force, the old difficulties.

Retribution beyond the grave and especially the future punishment of sin are to us, reason about them as we may, insoluble mysteries. The entire teaching of the Bible, abundantly sufficient as it is to guide us safely along the way of life, is altogether insufficient to enable us to anticipate the sentence which the great Judge will pronounce on the men and women around us.

But to every careful student of the New Testament two doctrines stand out as clearly and frequently taught there: (1) that eternal life in infinite blessing awaits all who put trust in Christ and walk in His steps; (2) that ruin, complete and final, awaits those who reject the salvation He offers and persist in what they know to be sin. These doctrines may be traced by decisive documentary evidence to His lips as part of the message from God which He announced to men. As His servants, we are bound, especially those who are recognized teachers in His Church, to announce these solemn truths to all who will hear us. To go further, is to overstep the limits of the revelation given to us in Christ, and to announce in His name that which He has not spoken. To add to, is as perilous as to take away from, "the words of the prophecy of this Book." We have no right to assert in God's name anything more than we can trace by abundant and decisive evidence to the lips of Christ and the pen of the Apostles and Evangelists. And the teaching which can be so traced is all we need.

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